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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 007194

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [OVIP](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

REF: A. SANTO DOMINGO 6707

[1](#)B. SANTO DOMINGO 4990

Classified By: ECOPOL COUNSELOR MICHAEL MEIGS FOR REASONS 1.5 (B/D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) DRL PDAS Ambassador Michael Kozak and DRL Office of Multilateral Affairs Deputy Director Lynn Sicade visited the Dominican Republic November 20-22 to build support for the UN Commission on Human Rights, in which the GODR will participate starting next year. Meetings with local governmental and nongovernmental interlocutors provided Ambassador Kozak with a broad sense of the Dominican Republic's commitment to respect for human rights internationally and domestically. The Dominican Government pledged its support for UN human rights initiatives with a particular emphasis on children's rights. Some Dominican officials acknowledged the country's human rights concerns with neighbor Haiti and asked Ambassador Kozak to communicate those concerns to the USG. End Summary.

KOZAK VISIT: A POSITIVE FIRST STEP

[1](#)2. (U) Ambassador Michael Kozak and Lynn Sicade met with Ambassador Hertell and emboffs to reiterate close bilateral collaboration regarding the Dominican Republic's upcoming seat at the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), scheduled for March 2004. Ambassador Kozak explained how important it will be to change UNCHR's current composition -- removing undemocratic member governments -- and to request the GODR's cooperation in that effort. He said region-wide support from UNCHR members will be critical to push through resolutions considered priority to the USG, for example on rights of the child. Given the Dominican Republic's current emphasis on protecting children (reftel B), the GODR could also collaborate next year with the UN as it celebrates "The Year of the Family."

TAKING HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ambassador Kozak and Sicade met with President Mejia's sister and brother-in-law, Chavela and Sergio Grullon, to deliver the message about the Dominican Republic's UNCHR participation at the highest levels. As President of the National Council on Children and Adolescents (CONANI), Chavela Grullon has been prominently promoting children's rights. Secretary of the Presidency Sergio Grullon serves as one of President Mejia's closest advisers. Both said they would share USG concerns about the UNCHR with President Mejia. Both were also proud of the GODR's recent efforts against trafficking in persons and strengthening of the Code on Minors. Chavela passionately recounted her personal endeavors to protect children from trafficking and poverty, including helping to raise street kids she had rescued. She also seemed eager to encourage GODR sponsorship of any UNCHR resolution on children's and family issues. Chavela encouraged Ambassador Kozak and the Embassy to use the good offices of her daughter, assigned recently to the Dominican mission at the EU, to promote UNCHR objectives.

FOREIGN RELATIONS SECRETARIAT SUPPORTS UNCHR

[1](#)4. (U) Senior officials at the Foreign Relations Secretariat assured Ambassador Kozak of GODR support of USG objectives at the UNCHR. Meeting participants included: Ambassador Rhadys Abreu de Polanco, Deputy Director of International Organizations Division and Human Rights Official Ambassador Jorge Santiago, Legal Advisor and Director of National Commission on Refugees Ambassador Francia Sencion, Director of Americas Division Ambassador Roger Espallait, Director of North American Affairs Office Ambassador Maritza Guerrero, Trade Agreements Office

[1](#)5. (U) The officials told us that the Foreign Relations Secretariat had worked diligently to establish an

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inter-institutional commission on human rights, which would be announced soon by presidential decree. Ambassador Santiago said this initiative embodied their belief that promoting human rights was everyone's responsibility, not just the Secretariat's. Ambassador Kozak congratulated the

officials said he hoped other countries could follow the Dominican Republic's example. He also thanked the GODR for its support on the Canadian-sponsored UNGA resolution on Iran and the US candidate for the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (reftel A).

16. (U) Sicade went into more detail about disputes over technical language in certain conventions. She said, for example, that the USG did not favor ratifying the convention on the rights of the child because it contains the phrase "the standard" versus "a standard." Meeting participants appeared to understand that the USG, when it questions linguistic technicalities in international conventions, does not mean to jeopardize their spirit or objectives, but rather aims to avoid conflict with pre-existing U.S. laws. Ambassador Kozak emphasized that all signatory countries to international conventions or resolutions should verify that domestic compliance mechanisms are already in place. Participants agreed that states must create the necessary conditions in which citizens can exercise their human rights.

OFF THE RECORD WITH JOURNALISTS

17. (U) In an off-the-record briefing for prominent print and television journalists, Ambassdor Kozak reiterated the USG's desire to coordinate closely with the GODR during its UNCHR membership and reviewed our desire to streamline UNCHR procedures to make it a more effective proponent of human rights in undemocratic countries. The journalists asked about USG concerns over human rights issues in the Dominican Republic, such as murders by police. Emboffs referred to the country report on human rights and commented on a recent reduction of those killings. A prominent newspaper editor asked whether President Mejia's announced intent to seek re-election next year was undermining foreign confidence in the GODR. Emboff replied that the USG expected the election to be free, fair, transparent, and clean -- in line with the past two presidential elections here -- and that international and domestic observers would provide the necessary confidence in the election process.

COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

18. (C) The GODR is open to cooperation with us in the UN context, but also is inclined to join consensus in regional groupings such as GRULAC or the Rio Group. To achieve the USG goal of prior coordination on UNCHR resolutions, we will need to go in early to discuss specific draft texts and solicit the support of the GODR before it commits to regional positions that might differ from ours.
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